

## Manitoba Addictions Awareness Week



### Fast Facts on Alcohol

- Ethyl alcohol is the type of alcohol found in alcoholic beverages. It is a depressant drug. A depressant drug slows down your body functions.
- One 12 ounce (340 ml) bottle of beer has the same amount of alcohol as one 5 oz glass of wine or 1.5 oz of spirits (whiskey, vodka, etc.)
- It takes approximately one to two hours for an adult liver to break down the alcohol in one standard drink. If a person drinks more than this the alcohol will build up in the body until the body can get rid of it. The more alcohol there is in the body the more intoxicated a person will become and the longer it will take for the alcohol to leave their body.

#### **Short-term Effects May Include:**

- feelings of relaxation and drowsiness
- feeling more sociable & lowered inhibitions (this means that a person is more likely to do things that they would not normally do)
- impaired judgement (this may result in poor decision making)
- loss of coordination (trouble walking or moving)
- slurred speech & blurred vision
- lowered blood pressure, breathing, pulse
- aggressive behavior
- blackouts

#### **Long-term Effects May Include:**

Drinking heavily over a long period can lead to health problems. Here are some possible long-term effects of alcohol abuse:

- skin problems & stomach ulcers
- vitamin deficiencies
- sexual problems (decreased sperm production, impotency, infertility)
- intellectual impairment or memory loss
- liver damage & heart and circulatory problems

#### **Other Risks:**

- The more often a person drinks alcohol, the more likely they are to develop a tolerance to it. This means that more of the drug is needed to feel the effect. Regular users of alcohol may not appear to be drunk but are still not safe to perform tasks that require judgement such as driving.
- Alcohol is often not safe to use in combination with other drugs especially those that are also slow down the body. In some cases even a small amount of alcohol can change the effect of another drug. If you are taking medication it's a good idea to ask your doctor or pharmacist about the consequences of using alcohol while you are taking medication.
- Consuming large amounts of alcohol or drinking alcohol rapidly (chugging, drinking games, etc.) can lead to alcohol poisoning. Alcohol poisoning is an overdose of alcohol that results in vomiting, passing out and sometimes death.
- Some additional risks include injuries, accidents and unprotected sex.
- Alcohol use during pregnancy can cause permanent damage to the developing fetus.

Alcohol can be both psychologically and physically addictive. Withdrawal symptoms can include aches, pains, elevated blood pressure, rapid pulse and breathing, nausea, vomiting, panic, seizures, hallucinations, depression and even death. The more severe withdrawal symptoms are more likely to occur after long periods of heavy drinking.

**REMEMBER:** A person's experience with any drug can vary. There are a number of things that have an impact on person's experience with a drug including but not limited to: the amount and strength of the drug consumed, the

setting in which the drug is used, a person's mood or expectations prior to using the drug as well as the person's past experience with that drug. Developed by AFM Youth Community-based Services Unit.